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JANET SIKES, Council Member
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September 7, 2016

The Honorable Lee Chatfield
Chair House Local Government Committee
Anderson House Office Building
Post Office Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Dear Chairman Chatfield:

Thank-you for taking time to read this correspondence. I would have loved to have come to Lansing and speak to you directly, but I will be out of town this week.

As a Mayor, I would like to see SB 239 passed and eliminate local control on breed specific legislation. I do not feel that it is the place of a community leader to tell residents what kind of dog they can have. Local government should never impinge upon the personal rights of the people they represent, but rather make ordinances that hold the owner responsible for their dogs actions and behavior.

The honest reality is that breed specific legislation is ineffective and it creates more problems than it solves. I am also a board member of an organization called C.H.A.I.N.E.D. Inc., where we take care of chained dogs, many of them pit bulls. Since 2011 we have taken care of over 1,400 chained dogs. Several of the communities that have breed specific legislation are the very same communities that have pit bulls in every other yard, these dogs are unlicensed, most have never been to a vet, and they are being backyard bred. Breed specific ordinances require local units of government, already strapped for money, to dedicate resources to enforcement. This is unnecessarily onerous and is undoubtedly ineffective.

I am asking for your support of Senate Bill 239 by voting for the bill in the House Local Government Committee, on the House floor, and by encouraging your colleagues to do the same. The bill has already passed the Senate with overwhelming, bipartisan vote. It is my understanding that a hearing on the bill is scheduled for September 7, 2016, before your committee.

Finally, especially in more urban areas, a law-abiding citizen walking a well-trained dog could inadvertently cross one local unit boundary and enter another – unknowingly commit a crime, be fined, and have their dog seized or worse.

Simply put – breed specific ordinances at the local level are ineffective, costly and distract from where true attention and resources should be focused, on the enforcement of laws and ordinances that hold pet owners accountable for the pet's behavior – regardless of breed.

Thank you, and again – please support SB 239.

Sincerely,

Patricia Odette DC
Mayor City of Woodhaven

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